

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Cancel Claims 1-15 without prejudice. Please accept amended Claims 17 and 21 as follows:

Listing of claims:

1-16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for causing a validation of a services Consumer, the computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect the steps of:

providing to a Consumer a service invocation specification including criteria for accessing levels of a service by a service Provider, wherein the Consumer is denied access to the service until a capability of the Consumer to use at least one of the levels of the service validated;

providing to the Consumer first validation data related to a the use of the levels of the service of the service Provider;

processing the first validation data by the Consumer in accordance with the services invocation specification to generate a set of second validation data;

receiving from the Consumer the set of second validation data responsive to said first validation data and complying with said service invocation specification;

processing the set of second validation data by the service Provider to evaluate a the capability of the Consumer to use at least one of the levels the service of the service Provider, wherein processing comprises evaluating the set of second validation data against the criteria for accessing at least one of the levels of the service; and

providing at least one level of the service to the Consumer responsive to a request of the Consumer ~~upon only after~~ the evaluation of said set of second validation data for compliance with said service invocation specification, wherein the at least one level of the service provided to the Consumer is determined according to the evaluation of the set of second validation data against the criteria ~~said set of second validation data is determined to be compliant.~~

18. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said second validation data include data elements that are not included within said first validation data and

are generated by said Consumer in response to said first validation data.

19. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, further effecting the step of includes analyzing compliance by said second validation data with said service invocation specification.

20. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said step of analyzing compliance is performed by a third party that transmits the results thereof to the Provider.

21. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said first validation data include at least one error injected therein; and said second validation data ~~include an indication of~~ includes a problem report aggregating said injected errors.

22. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: at least some of said first validation data are generated by a source other than said Provider.

23. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said Provider performs validation without charge.

24. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said Provider charges said Consumer for services at a rate that depends on the result of said validation.

25. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 24, in which: said Provider charges at a first rate for services for which the Consumer has qualified and at a second rate for services for which the Consumer has not qualified.

26. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which said Provider validates all second validation data submitted by a Consumer and thereby provides service to all Consumers that submit second validation data.

27. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said Provider performs validation without charge below a service threshold and thereafter charges said

Consumer for additional validation services.

28. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 24, in which: said Provider charges said Consumer for services at a rate that reflects an additional cost to said Provider for supplying services to a Consumer that has not met the provisions of said service invocation specification.

29. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: the Provider notifies the Consumer that the step of providing the service is contingent on at least one of: amount of time elapsed since receipt of second validation data remaining below a threshold; reconfirmation after a scheduled time; and the service will only be provided along with other services.

30. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, further comprising steps of: Receiving a Consumer request for first validation data Responsive to said request, transmitting said first validation data to said service Consumer.

31. (Original) An article of manufacture according to claim 17, in which: said service invocation specification comprises specifications for a delivered service, which delivered service is supplied in part by at least one third-party Provider that supplies at least one service to said Provider that is included in the delivered service supplied to said Consumer.